

Message Text

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJ: USAF ASSISTANCE TO RSAF

REFS: A. STATE 169517; B. SINGAPORE 1568; C. STATE 075522

1. WE PERCEIVE A NUMBER OF VALID REASONS WHY ON BALANCE USAF TRAINING FOR RSAF WOULD BE IN U.S. NATIONAL INTEREST. HOWEVER, EMBASSY TAKES STRONG EXCEPTION TO RATIONALE STATED IN PARAS 3-6 OF USAF TEAM REPORT. IN ESSENCE, THESE PARAGRAPHS CITE EMBASSY, COMMONWEALTH AND SINGAPOREAN SOURCES AS INDICATING THAT GOS REQUEST FOR USAF PERSONNEL IS MOTIVATED AS MUCH BY THE PROSPECT OF INCREASED U.S. PRESENCE AS BY THE DESIRE FOR USEFUL MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE. IT IS TRUE THAT THE GOS DOES WANT U.S. TO MAINTAIN AND POSSIBLY INCREASE ITS MILITARY PRESENCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, AND CONTINUES TO WELCOME THE MANY VISITS OF SEVENTH FLEET UNITS TO SINGAPORE. NEVERTHELESS, THE GOS IS MUCH MORE CAUTIOUS WHEN IT COMES TO ACCEPTING A GREATER U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN SINGAPORE. THIS CAUTION WAS QUITE EVIDENT WHEN WE APPROACHED P.M. LEE ABOUT STAGING P-3 FLIGHTS THROUGH SINGAPORE. IF THE GOS HAD REALLY WANTED A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN SINGAPORE, IT WOULD NOT HAVE PASSED UP THIS OPPORTUNITY. THE FOREIGN MINISTER HAS RECENTLY MADE IT QUITE CLEAR TO US THAT AN INCREASE IN U.S. OFFICIAL PERSONNEL IN SINGAPORE ONLY GIVES THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR AN ARGUMENT FOR INCREASING THE RUSSIAN PRESENCE, SOMETHING THE GOS PREFERS TO

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AVOID IF AT ALL POSSIBLE.

2. OUR AIR ATTACHE DOES NOT KNOW WHAT INFORMATION TEAM RECEIVED WHICH CAUSED IT TO REACH OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS IN PARAS 3-6 OF TEAM REPORT, BUT BELIEVES IT IS ERRONEOUS. GOS OFFICIALS HAVE EXPLAINED THEIR REQUEST ON THE GROUNDS THAT THEY PREFER U.S. MILITARY TRAINING BECAUSE ON THS BASIS OF PAST EXPERIENCE WITH TRAINING TEAMS, OUR TRAINERS GET DOWN TO WORK QUICKLY, GET THE JOB DONE AND THEN GO HOME. SINCE THESE PARAGRAPHS CONVEY A MISLEADING PICTURE AND COULD CAUSE UNNECESSARY MISUNDERSTANDINGS ON THE HILL IF THIS REPORT EVER CAME INTO CONGRESSIONAL HANDS, WE RECOMMEND THESE PARAGRAPHS BE DELETED FROM THE REPORT. ALTHOUGH WE DO NOT THINK GOS HAS REQUESTED USAF PERSONNEL FOR THE ULTERIOR MOTIVE SUGGESTED IN THIS PART OF THE TEAM REPORT, WE DO THINK WE SHOULD BE EXTREMELY CAREFUL IN THE WAY WE RESPOND TO THIS REQUEST SO THAT WE NEITHER CONVEY TO THE GOS NOR TO OTHERS THE IMPRESSION THAT WE HAVE SUCH A GROWING INVOLVEMENT IN SINGAPORE THAT IT COULD BE CONSTRUED AS A COMMITMENT.

3. OUR BASIC PROBLEM WITH PROPOSED INSTRUCTION, AIDE MEMOIRE AND ATTACHMENTS IS THAT THEY USE THE TERM "ADVISORS", AND INDICATE VERY PRECISELY THAT EACH ADVISOR WILL HAVE AS HIS PRIMARY DUTY TO ADVISE A PARTICULAR RSAF OFFICER RATHER THAN PROVIDE FUNCTIONAL TRAINING FOR A PARTICULAR ELEMENT OR AREA OF THE RSAF. THE VERY CLEAR IMPLICATION IS THAT EACH OFFICER WOULD BE COLOCATED NEXT TO A PARTICULAR SENIOR OFFICER IN THE RSAF. AS INDICATED REFS B AND C IT WOULD BE MUCH MORE APPROPRIATE AND INDEED ACCURATE TO REFER TO USAF PERSONNEL AS A "TEMPORARY MANAGEMENT TRAINING TEAM" WHOSE FUNCTION WOULD BE TO TRAIN ELEMENTS OF THE RSAF, E.G., THE AIR STAFF AND THE OPERATIONS STAFF IN IMPROVING THEIR COMMAND AND CONTROL CAPABILITIES.

4. WE HAVE HAD TEMPORARY MILITARY TRAINING TEAMS IN SINGAPORE BEFORE, AND HAVE HAD NO TROUBLE EXPLAINING THEM BECAUSE THEY QUIETLY PERFORMED THE SPECIFIC TRAINING FUNCTION FOR WHICH THEY WERE HIRED AND THEN LEFT. WE SHOULD STICK TO THIS FORMULA AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE EVEN THOUGH THE TEAM WOULD STAY FOR TWO YEARS. IF WE SET UP "ADVISORY" POSITIONS ALONG THE LINES INDICATED IN THE ATTACHMENT TO THE AIDE MEMOIRE, WE BELIEVE THIS ARRANGEMENT COULD MUCH MORE EASILY LEND ITSELF TO DIPLOMATIC AND PRESS SPECULATION THAT IN REALITY THE U.S. WAS RUNNING THE

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RSAF AND HAD SET UP AN AIR FORCE MAAG IN SINGAPORE. BESIDES THE OBVIOUS PROBLEM OF CONGRESSIONAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS THIS COULD GENERATE PROBLEMS WITH SINGAPORE'S NEIGHBORS, AND MIGHT POSSIBLY RUN AFOUL OF SOME OF THE RESTRICTIONS AND PROHIBITIONS IN THE NEW FOREIGN ASSISTANCE LEGISLATION WHICH WE UNDERSTAND ABOLISHES MAAGS AND RESTRICTS DAO ACTIVITIES AFTER SEPTEMBER 1977. ON LATTER POINT NOTED ABOVE, SINCE WE DO NOT HAVE THE FINAL TEXT OF THE RECENT LEGISLATION WE ARE NOT SURE JUST WHAT WOULD

BE THE BEST WAY OF ASSIGNING USAF PERSONNEL TO SINGAPORE TO AVOID ANY PROHIBITIONS OR RESTRICTIONS CONTAINED IN THIS LEGISLATION. BELIEVE USAF TEAM MEMBERS WOULD STILL BE ABLE TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY WITHOUT SITTING AT LEFT HAND OF SELECTED RSAF COMMAND AND STAFF PERSONNEL. AIDE MEMOIRE AND ATTACHMENTS SHOULD BE REDRAFTED TO REFLECT THIS CONCEPT OF A TRAINING TEAM RATHER THAN ADVISORS. WE THINK THIS IS MUCH MORE THAN JUST A MATTER OF COSMETIC TERMINOLOGY. IN SHORT, A TRAINING TEAM ORGANIZED TO TRAIN THE RSAF IN MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL FUNCTIONS AND TECHNIQUES IS BOTH CONCEPTUALLY AND ACTUALLY QUITE DIFFERENT (AND MUCH LESS INTIMATE) FROM INDIVIDUAL ADVISORS WHO ARE SITTING AT THE ELBOW OF THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF, HEAD OF OPERATIONS, ETC., AND ARE INVOLVED IN TELLING HIM HOW TO PERFORM HIS JOB.

5. UNLESS HANDLED VERY CAREFULLY PARA 3 OF AIDE MEMOIRE AND THIRD ATTACHMENT RISKS POSSIBILITY OF OFFENDING THE BRITISH UPON WHOSE COOPERATION WE DEPEND WITH REFERENCE TO ACCESS TO BERTHS 6 AND 7 AT THE NAVAL BASIN AND NPW'S. UK OFFICERS MIGHT EASILY MISINTERPRET ANY U.S. REQUIREMENT THAT THEY DEPART BEFORE OUR PERSONNEL ARRIVED. AGAIN WE BELIEVE THE BASIC PROBLEM STEMS FROM THE CONCEPT THAT USAF PERSONNEL WOULD BE ASSIGNED TO "ADVISE" PARTICULAR RSAF OFFICERS RATHER THAN TRAIN RSAF ELEMENTS IN PARTICULAR COMMAND AND CONTROL FUNCTIONS. WE BELIEVE GOS WOULD ALSO WISH TO HANDLE PHASING IN OF USAF PERSONNEL IN A WAY WHICH WOULD AVOID GIVING OFFENSE TO BRITISH, AND WOULD TAKE THE NECESSARY ACTION TO PHASE OUT COMMONWEALTH PERSONNEL BEFORE OUR PERSONNEL WERE IN PLACE. WE COULD MAKE IT A CONDITION THAT OUR ASSISTANCE IS DESIGNED TO MAKE THE RSAF SELF-SUFFICIENT AND THAT OUR PERSONNEL COULD ONLY TRAIN SINGAPOREANS WHICH IS WHAT GOS ITSELF WANTS. HOWEVER, WE THINK IT WOULD BE UNWISE TO REFER TO COMMONWEALTH OFFICERS IN OTHER AIDE MEMOIRE OR ATTACHMENTS.

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6. EMBASSY RECOMMENDED IN REF B THAT NUMBER OF USAF PERSONNEL BE LIMITED TO THREE. IF USAF INSISTS THAT IT CAN NOT DO THE JOB WITHOUT ASSIGNING FIVE TRAINERS, I WILL RELUCTANTLY ACCEPT THIS NUMBER, BUT ONLY ON THE THEORY THAT IF THIS MISSION IS TO BE PERFORMED AT ALL IT SHOULD BE PERFORMED WELL. HOWEVER, IT MUST BE FULLY UNDERSTOOD BY BOTH GOS AND DOD THAT NUMBER WILL NOT INCREASE, THAT THE USAF ACCEPTS THE CONCEPT OF A TRAINING TEAM AS OPPOSED TO INDIVIDUAL ADVISORS TO SENIOR RSAF OFFICIALS AS OUTLINED ABOVE, AND THAT THEY LEAVE PROMPTLY WITHOUT REPLACEMENT UPON THE COMPLETION OF THEIR TRAINING ASSIGNMENT.

7. BELIEVE GOS MAY FIND COST OF PACKAGE TO BE SOMEWHAT HIGH, BUT CONSIDER THERE IS EVEN CHANCE IT WILL BE ACCEPTED. ALTHOUGH GOS MAY NOT WANT TO BUY ALL PARTS OF THE PACKAGE, EMBASSY AGREES FINAL COSTS SHOULD NOT BE SUBJECT TO NEGOTIATION.

8. RECOMMEND FIVE OFFICERS BE ATTACHED TO ATTACHE OFFICE FOR POLICY GUIDANCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS. IF GOS DOES NOT WISH TO ACCORD THEM STATUS OF "HOME-BASED STAFF", WE COULD SUGGEST THAT MINDEF ARRANGE WITH MFA TO ACCORD THEM STATUS OF FORMER DET 12 OR U.S. NAVY OFFICE PERSONNEL. THIS WOULD MEAN THEY WOULD NOT BE ENTITLED TO ANY DIPLOMATIC PRIVILEGES. HOWEVER, MINDEF MIGHT BE ABLE TO MAKE SOME PERKS AVAILABLE IF THESE WERE INCLUDED IN THE ESTIMATED COST PACKAGE. I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF ALL CONCERNED IF THEIR PROFILE BE KEPT LOW. HOLDRIDGE

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